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# 8 Senators Seek to Block New U.N. Information Unit

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UNITED NATIONS, April 15—Eight U.S. senators have protested an American-backed move to set up a new information-gathering office at the United Nations, charging that it would benefit Soviet spy operations.

U.S. Ambassador Vernon Walters, who had campaigned to move a part of the office out of a Soviet-controlled division of the U.N. Secretariat, said that two of the senators withdrew their objections after his personal appeals. But two of the other senators—William V. Roth Jr. (R-Del.) and Robert Dole (R-Kan.)—have cosponsored a bill to block the U.S. share of funding for the new office.

Walters, a former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency, called the creation of the new U.N. unit a setback for Soviet intelligence operations. But Roth "still intends to pursue the matter. He was not persuaded by Walters' arguments," said his spokeswoman, Verna Wilkins.

The U.N. unit at the center of the controversy, the Office of Research and Information Collection, came into existence today with a professional staff that will ultimately total 18.

It has been justified as a budget-cutting move because it will consolidate several scattered functions and use fewer staff.

One operation it will replace is the Political Information News Service, a daily, in-house press and radio summary that was run by Soviet Bloc nations in the U.N. division, headed by a Soviet undersecretary.

The new unit will also continue the gathering of nonclassified information, such as local press clippings and government statements, compiled by 67 U.N. information centers around the world. This "early warning system," set up five years ago by Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to alert him to political disputes before they evolved into peace-threatening crises, has been run by an American, James Sutterlin, who is retiring in June.

The new office will be headed by James Jonah, 53, of Sierra Leone. He is a 25-year U.N. staffer viewed by Americans as a "squeaky clean" disciple of such international civil servants as Dag Hammarskjöld, Ralph Bunche and Brian Urquhart.

U.N. officials and American diplomats here say that Walters and his predecessor,

Jeane Kirkpatrick, had made the de-Sovietization of the news service one of their prime political goals.

"We, the British and the French, have been demanding just such a move for years," said one high-ranking American. "The secretary general finally wipes out PINS—and now this. The whole thing is off the wall . . . There is no intelligence-gathering function here. The new office will read newspapers and analyze the stuff that bears on the U.N. This is something we want to happen."

He and U.N. officials charged that Roth had reacted to distorted presentations on the plan by anti-U.N. lobbyists and conservative American political appointees in the Secretariat and the State Department.

However, a letter signed by the senators and addressed to Perez de Cuellar charged that the U.N. office would "collect information on the internal political situations" in various countries. It called such action "an intrusion into the political affairs" of nations, in violation of the U.N. Charter.

The letter also expressed the fear that the office would "facilitate the operations of foreign intelligence agencies," specifically the Soviet KGB, which maintains agents in the Secretariat and would gain access to the collected data. "That would be prejudicial to U.S. security interests," the letter said.

Although the raw data will come from the public domain, the analysis provided by U.N. officials could be useful to Soviet agents, said opponents of the U.N. office.

"I understand the State Department says they'll be closely monitoring this office," said Roth in a statement last week, "but they said the same thing about the U.S. Embassy in Moscow."

The senators who signed the letter with Roth and Dole are David L. Boren (D-Okla.), William S. Cohen (R-Maine), Don Nickles (R-Okla.), Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), Wendell H. Ford (D-Ky.), Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) and Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.)

U.N. officials said they have no estimate as yet of the cost of the new unit. The United States already withholds millions of dollars from U.N. operations, but the new attempt to penalize the organization was viewed by American diplomats as potentially damaging to their efforts to reconcile it with Congress.